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of an old Chinese piece in hard stone. The Chinese carved ivory bottle shows more delicate ornamentation than is applied to stones. The remaining bottle, also in ivory, is of Japanese make, and is comparatively modern in style. The netsuke, A, belonging to it, is in bronze.

## Notes for Collectors.



Collectors know, the cups, bowls, and other utensils in which the offerings of rice, fruits, and other edibles are placed on the altar of Buddha, when of old date, are usually among the chefs-d'œuvres of Chinese pottery. Maurice Jametel, in "La Chine Inconnue," gives some marks whereby the finer pieces of the sort may be known. They usually bear on the outside prayers and invocations in Thibetan, the sacred language of the Buddhists. Sometimes these characters have introduced among them an assemblage of strokes taking the form of a heart, and meant to represent the mystic "tree of life." Sometimes, also, the prayers are repeated in the form of a border around the interior edge of the vessel.



JAPANESE PORCELAIN SNUFF-BOTTLE. BLUE DECORATION.

This decoration is usually in blue, but occasionally red and green are added; never other colors. The cups of the Ming dynasty are distinguished by the extreme purity of the blue. Those of the Kien-long period are of a tint less pure, but the whiteness of the paste and the fineness of the design to a European more than make up for that defect. To a Chinaman this is not so. Age is more than all other qualities with him. One way in which he judges of the age of a piece is by its weight. The old makers did not economize on their material. Again, in modern pieces the characters traced on these cups and bowls are apt to be illegible, because the workmen, unable to read them, have come by degrees to representing them by marks quite unlike them. As between the two periods best known to collectors, the Ming porcelains may be distinguished (and this applies to all porcelains on which characters of any sort are drawn) by the free, cursive appearance of the writing. It has a look of being done with "chic." Under the Kang-hi and the Kien-long the writing is more regular and studied.

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THE Chinese dealers are adepts in certain kinds of truquage, but are by no means the equals of the Europeans, or, let us add, American fabricators of modern antiques in inventing new tricks. They can mend broken pieces so that it is extremely difficult to detect the joining. Should the neck or foot of a vase be broken off and lost, they will grind down the broken edge so smoothly and carefully that one is likely to think that the vase was originally made so. They do not restore broken pieces with silver or silver-gilt; works so restored have been patched up in America or Europe. But they will sometimes supply the place of the missing piece with plaster, and carry the decoration across it with such skill as often to deceive a confiding purchaser. Similarly, they sometimes have the boldness to fill up old pieces in cloisonné, from which the enamel has partly fallen out, with colored wax. When the trick is discovered they excuse themselves by saying that it was

not meant to deceive, but only to cover up "a natural defect." As for marks, the style of the writing apart, M. Jametel agrees with other good judges that they are of no value whatever. He says that it is no uncommon occurrence to find a beggar by the roadside eating his



CHINESE CARVED IVORY SNUFF-BOTTLE.

meal of scraps out of a bowl bearing the most celebrated marks of the Ming or the Kien-long period.

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THE sale at Moore's auction rooms on November 2d and 3d, of a considerable number of jades, porcelains, and other Oriental art objects, from the stock of Herter Bros., attracted attention as much because of the good faith shown in publicly announcing that certain pieces were reserved from sale under the usual conditions, as because of the beauty of some of the specimens. As our readers are aware, we have always reprobated the common practice of making such reservations without informing the public, and it is encouraging to see a house like Herter's giving its influence on the side of honesty at public sales. The firm put an upset price of \$400 each on three pieces of jade and one porcelain jar, \$500 on a white jade bowl, \$1500 on a "peachbloss" vase, \$1200 on a green jade bottle, and \$1000 on a green jade spill, and let all the rest go for what they would bring. None of the reserved pieces found purchasers, although, as the market rules, they were not marked too high. Few of the pieces that were sold brought fair prices, and many went



CHINESE GLASS SNUFF-BOTTLE.  
BROWN ORNAMENT ON WHITE GROUND.

much below their cost. Still, that is what would probably happen in any case, and Messrs. Herter will hardly consider that they have paid too dearly for sustaining the reputation of their name. A flat jade pitcher with carved lizard handle, teak stand, and rings under the spout brought \$265; a large hawthorn jar, dark color, \$104.50;

a rectangular panel of green jade, with dragons carved "au jour" and teak stand, \$175; a large green jade bowl, with cover, \$107; six bronze panels ornamented with insects, fish, birds, etc., in colored metals, \$132; a pale green casket and cover of jade, \$95; a large blue and white porcelain jar, \$190; a pair of celadon beakers, \$82; an old Chinese basin of cloisonné enamel, \$95; a powder blue porcelain vase, twenty-eight inches high, \$100; a white jade pilgrim bottle, carved and jewelled, \$75; two bowls and a bottle in carved rose quartz, \$190; a carved rock crystal bottle, with stopper and cup and teak stand inlaid with silver, \$95; two large porcelain vases, tea-leaf green, \$190. Such an opportunity will not soon occur again as was offered by the sale to amateurs beginning to form collections of Oriental objects. The dealers Lanthier, Watson, Thompson, and Moore bought heavily. Other buyers of note were Mr. Thomas B. Clark, Consul-General Schlesinger, Mr. W. C. Ostler, Mr. William B. Dowd, Mrs. J. Milbank, and Mr. H. R. King.

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A COLLECTION of several hundred Japanese and Korean tea-jars, all in their original bags of old silk or damask, makes one of the most interesting features of



CHINESE SARDONYX SNUFF-BOTTLE.

the splendid display of the First Japanese Trading Company's opening. The variety in shape, size, color and markings of these little pieces, is peculiarly surprising to one who knows how difficult it is to get a European or American mechanic, potter or other, to vary by a hair's breadth from his usual standard. There are here all shades of brown and gray, mottled, streaked, sprinkled, spotted, no two alike, and the forms vary as greatly. A quantity of old inros and tobacco-boxes in lacquer, and carved and inlaid wood, is noticeable in the next place. Black lacquers—the rarest—are in greatest number and their ornamentation is generally in the severe old style—severe, that is, in comparison with later Japanese work. A tobacco-box of unusual size is made of a section of bamboo, with a wooden cover inlaid with grapes in ivory and nacre and vine leaves, in different-colored bronzes, all in high relief. A gray lacquer inro has a gourd in nacre and gold lacquer brought out in relief upon it, and has a netsuke of dark wood representing a squirming mass of monkeys, held together by tails, claws and teeth. Of other netsukes, unattached, one represents an old priest making the acquaintance of a frog which has jumped upon his foot. He is half-pleased, half-disgusted by the animal's familiarity. Another shows a bear with well-stuffed paunch, preparing to stow himself away for the winter. His eyes are not half as big as a pin's head, yet the iris is of mother-of-pearl, and the pupils of black lacquer. An interesting object is a pocket-inkstand and brush-case combined, in silver, the inkstand made from antique sword ornaments. A well-arranged case of sword-guards shows the progress of the art of hammering and inlaying metal in Japan from the earliest dates to the most modern. Ivory carvings, lacquer-boxes, old porcelains, jades and crystals are also to be seen.

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IN modern work, Mr. Shugio shows the latest developments of Japanese taste and invention in porcelains ornamented with different-colored glazes on a black or



gray unglazed ground, others decorated with cloisonné enamel, artistic bowls and baskets of silver bronze.

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LANTHIER shows a small but remarkably fine collection of old Chinese porcelains and jade. Most of the pieces have been imported directly from Peking, and, having in view their high quality, they certainly show that China is not yet exhausted as a hunting-ground for collectors. The collection is especially rich in celadons and in white. Among the latter we may particularize a pure white rouleau finely engraved with chrysanthemums; a square, upright bottle with dragon and waves in low relief, showing the finest quality of paste; a cream-white vase with incised drawing of swans in water, and a pair of "grains of rice" cups, with covers, of exceptional quality. Of the celadons, a small sacrificial cup of very pale color, ornamented with conventional verniculated designs is, perhaps, the finest. Others are a pale green upright vase with large key pattern in low relief; a globular vase with raised imitation of cordage, and a tall sea-green vase with peonies. The collection also contains some fine specimens of turquoise, notably a large mottled and truité vase of most seductive aspect; some fine small pieces of liver color; a multicolor vase with dragon and flowers under glaze in red, green and blue; a handsome black vase with flowers and birds, two and one half feet high, and some very good specimens of coral red. The glory of the collection, however, is a superb sang-de-boeuf vase about thirty inches high, for which \$5000 is the "upset price." Of the jades, two pieces are remarkable for their extremely rare color—yellow—as much as for the beauty of their workmanship. Another is a wonderful specimen of really artistic carving in this beautiful but obdurate material. It is a low vase with quite a family of dragons, big and little, grouped about it, and serving for handles.

#### COLLECTING IN CHINA.

ONE would naturally suppose that the best way to obtain, at the lowest prices, the best specimens of any sort of merchandise would be to go to the country of its production and buy it at first hand. So it may be and undoubtedly is in other lands, but in regard to China, where almost everything is upside down according to our notions, this rule must be reversed. As with most other things, however, this appears reasonable—when one knows the reasons. These are that China has been pretty well swept of fine examples of her ancient manufactures; that the modern, as everybody is aware, are inferior to them; and, as everybody does *not* know, that there is in China a body of collectors possessed of little knowledge but of much leisure, who, in the absence of other amusements, are obliged to pass much of their time in allowing themselves to be cheated by the Chinese curio merchants. This is the diplomatic corps at Peking, the members of which, being barred out of Chinese private life and distrustful of each other, having nothing to do and no theatres, balls or concerts to go to, are reduced to picking up what they can of old books, old porcelains, ivories, enamels, and even old clothes. Between their ignorance and the necessity which they are under of buying something, these gentlemen succeed in keeping up the price of second-rate Chinese curiosities in Peking and all China, and in making the fortunes of the dealers of the Imperial city, and of their agents who scour the provinces for them, of the capitalists who

furnish them with funds, and of the artisans who mend and "sur-decorate" the old pieces too badly treated by time to be vendable without their clever restorations.

We get from M. Jametel's "La Chine Inconnue" some details as to the methods of the Pekinese brocanteurs, the character of their wares, the prices they ask and those that they receive, which will be new and interesting to most of our readers. There is in Peking a quarter specially set apart for these gentry. This is in the quarter of the Temple smelling all through of musk and burning sandalwood, and inhabited mostly by Chinese, who regard all foreigners as "red-haired, tribute-bearing devils." Useless to enter any of the shops in this quarter, where, among old frippery of all sorts, a few doubtful antiques are exposed for sale. The proprietor will probably ignore your existence, or, if he deigns to answer a question as to the price of this or that piece of useless lumber, will ask some hundreds of Mexican dollars (the usual medium of exchange), with the evident intention of insulting you. Nevertheless, at the sort of rag-market which is held three times a month in the court-yard of the Temple of Long-fou-seu, it is sometimes possible to pick up a bargain at the risk of picking up also numbers of specimens of the insect world, which hop gayly about from one pile of trash to another. Still our author found there some of the most interesting of his trouvailles, among which may be reckoned a sun-dial of engraved copper, with a dial-plate of European manufacture, of the time of the Jesuit missions, which, as we know, was the period of the latest renaissance of Chinese art.

But usually when a European wishes to spend the afternoon in bargaining, he goes to one of the more respectable shops in the street called Ha-ta-meun, where the polished proprietor, clean shaven and in brown silk robe, will receive him with all politeness, call him "his great old ancestor"—a term of great respect—and introduce him into the rear apartment of his shop, where his most precious wares are kept. There he is seated on a sofa of carved Coromandel rosewood, such as may be seen occasionally in our curiosity shops; but in China it has an attachment which is seldom exported with it, though it might be of great utility. This is a diminutive table of the same material, as long as the width of the sofa, which is placed upon it, between the two occupants, and which serves, in the present case, to hold the object about which they are bargaining, the slate ink-slab and pitong of brushes, and a tea service or opium pipes. The money and the most precious of the curios are enclosed in a big coffer bound with polished copper, which serves for a safe. The rest of the stock occupies shelves about the apartment. Some heavy chairs are scattered about here and there, and through an octagonal pane of glass in the inner door one can see the court-yard of the proprietor's dwelling, a big vase full of gold fish in the centre, an artificial rock of pottery with a tuft of bamboos growing out of it in one corner, and a long row of chrysanthemums of all colors occupying one side of the narrow veranda, with tiled roof and bamboo columns, which runs around the court, and off which open the several living and sleeping rooms. As in all countries where time is *not* money, the process of bargaining is intentionally made as long as possible. The customer desires to see things that he does not want to buy, and the merchant asks several times the price that he is willing to take.

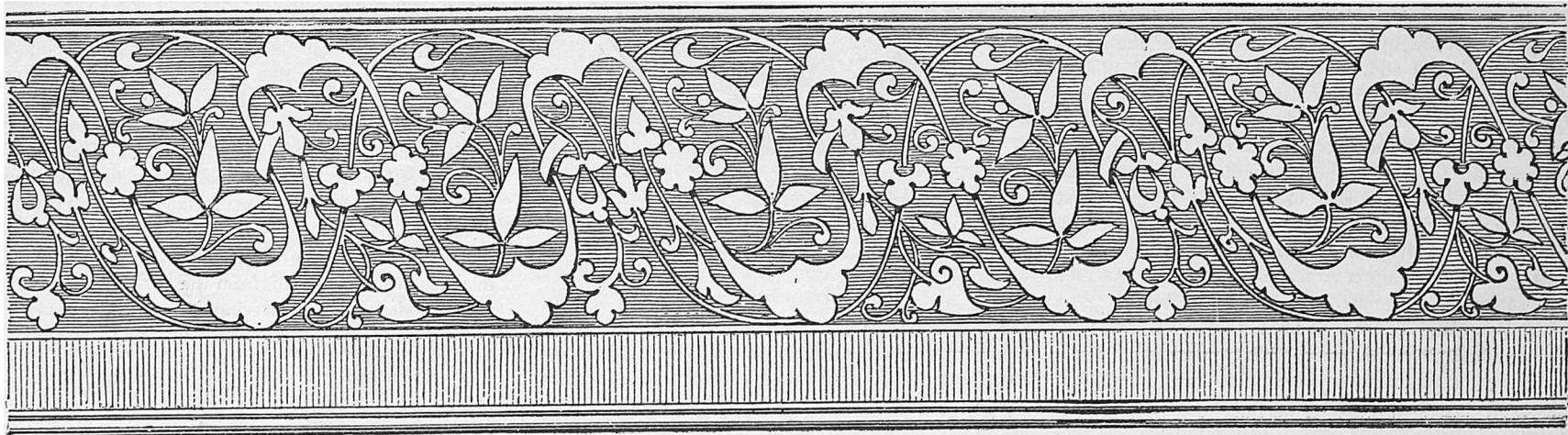
What the Chinese still retain of their ancient manufactures, and what they prize far above the best pieces

which they have sold to Caucasians, are the relics of their very ancient stoneware, glazed with green or celadon, but without artistic form or decoration whatever. These they prize on account of their great age—of which no European is competent to judge—and the price which they demand is simply prohibitive. Of really fine solid color pieces, such as may be found in every European or American collection worthy the name, very few ever appear in the Peking shops. The more ordinary decorated wares are as plentiful as in Europe, but bring a higher price, a platter of the "Compagnie des Indes" ware, of mediocre quality, bringing as much as twenty francs.

M. Jametel ranks the Chinese, even of the best periods, as far inferior to the Japanese in the arts of metal working. It is not only that their artistic bronzes are clumsy and inelegant, of poor composition—which defect the Japanese bronzes often have—and unpleasant color, but their arms and armor are of the worst quality. Everybody knows that the temper of a good Japanese blade is equal to the best that European armorers have forged; but the Chinese swords, he says, will only begin to cut when they have become indented like a saw.

Buying jades is pretty much like buying diamonds. It is not the beauty of the design for which the Chinese dealers charge apparently outrageous prices, but the quality of the stone and the finish of the workmanship of whatever kind. For a simple small cup an inch and a half high in dark green jade without decoration, but also without a flaw or vein or spot, \$700 is not considered too high a price, while a plaque ten inches wide and beautifully wrought in relief or in open work may be had for \$6. Yet working jade "a jour"—*i.e.*, showing the daylight through it—is a labor demanding the utmost skill and patience because of the extreme hardness and fragility of the material, and the difficulty is only increased by the presence of flaws or veins. In jades the fancies of the Chinese collectors will probably always rule prices, so that a Caucasian collector cannot be too careful how he puts his money into them.

Old Chinese red lacquer may sometimes be found adorned with carvings of great beauty, usually interlacings of dragons or intricate fret-work; but these also are highly prized by Chinese collectors, and are consequently dear even in Peking. Probably the Chinaman, with a passion for rarities, will think himself as badly treated, injured by the competition between himself and his western brother, as the latter does. But, at least, the Chinaman has the happiness of having almost completely to himself a field in which he takes the keenest pleasure. No one else has, so far, begun to collect rare editions of Chinese books or old and costly sticks of India ink. These latter are not bought for use—far from it—but to look at. They are classed according to their makers, those bearing the name of Li-ting-Kouei in the midst of gilt dragons and blue clouds being the most prized. As for books, after the classics, the books most collected are the educational publications of the native emperors, dealing with the geography, the natural history, and the industries of the empire. One of these, concerned with silk manufacture and the cultivation of rice, is in the possession of the present writer, and is extremely interesting from its pictures of Chinese country life. Other books of the Chinese bibliophile are of a less innocent character, and owe their present value in part to their rarity, which again is due to the efforts of the Imperial censors to prevent their publication or to destroy them.



ENGRAVED RIM OF AN EWER-STAND, ARABIAN WORK OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, IN THE CLUNY MUSEUM.